



**QUEEN'S
UNIVERSITY
BELFAST**

W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Agency and the Slaves' Civil War

Kelly, B. (2016). W. E. B. Du Bois, Black Agency and the Slaves' Civil War. *International Socialist Review*, (100), 48-68. <http://isreview.org/issue/100/w-e-b-du-bois-black-agency-and-slaves-civil-war>

Published in:
International Socialist Review

Document Version:
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Queen's University Belfast - Research Portal:
[Link to publication record in Queen's University Belfast Research Portal](#)

Publisher rights
Copyright 2016 The Author

General rights
Copyright for the publications made accessible via the Queen's University Belfast Research Portal is retained by the author(s) and / or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing these publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

Take down policy
The Research Portal is Queen's institutional repository that provides access to Queen's research output. Every effort has been made to ensure that content in the Research Portal does not infringe any person's rights, or applicable UK laws. If you discover content in the Research Portal that you believe breaches copyright or violates any law, please contact openaccess@qub.ac.uk.



W. E. B. Du Bois, Black agency and the slaves' Civil War

By Brian Kelly

Brian Kelly is a US-born historian and a Reader in American History teaching at Queen's University Belfast in Northern Ireland. His work is concerned mainly with labor and race in the American South, although much of his most recent scholarship focuses on the aftermath of slave emancipation. He is the author of *Race, Class, and Power in the Alabama Coalfields, 1908–1921*.

For most of the century and a half that has passed since the end of the US Civil War, the four million African Americans held as slaves in the Confederate South were written out of any meaningful role in their own emancipation. “The American negroes are the only people in the history of the world that ever became free without any effort of their own,” one widely read biographer wrote in 1928. “They had not started the war nor ended it, [but] twanged banjos around the railroad stations, sang melodious spirituals, and believed that some Yankee would soon come along and give each of them forty acres and a mule.”¹

This was a deliberately offensive rendering, but there was nothing that marked it off from the mainstream consensus on Black “passivity” forged in the crucible of late nineteenth-century white supremacy. Some historians acknowledged that slavery had been the cause of the conflict, but across the whole spectrum of “respectable” opinion, commentators agreed that the slaves had remained unmoved by the convulsions of war, and that freedom had been delivered to them in

an act of Yankee benevolence. The capitalist-turned patrician historian James Ford Rhodes argued that “the blacks made no move to rise” and “remained patiently submissive and faithful to their owners,”² but even this was not enough for some. Virginia-born Woodrow Wilson—then a professor at Princeton—derided Rhodes for his alleged “abolitionist prejudices,”³ and the cohort of academics gathering around Columbia University’s William A. Dunning and his collaborator John W. Burgess labored night and day to permanently inscribe their reactionary interpretation of the war into the historical record.⁴

In neglecting slave self-activity, liberals were indistinguishable from the most enthusiastic Confederate apologists. Often credited with breaking from the flagrant white supremacy of the Dunning School, Francis B. Simkins and Robert H. Woody asserted in their South Carolina study the “remarkable fact that during the war the blacks manifested no general desire to be free”—even while acknowledging, in the same breath, the execution of “twenty-seven negro insurrectionists” by Confederate scouts north of Charleston. Except for “a few [who] fled to Union lines,” they wrote, slaves “remained faithful to their masters”; freedom had been “forced on them by abolitionist troops.”⁵

The turn-of-the-century US Left was too weak and politically undeveloped to counter this bourgeois consensus on slave passivity. Leftists published little of any real value on America’s revolutionary past, and almost nothing worth reading on racism. Partly this reflected the prominent role of immigrant radicals unfamiliar with this history in the ranks of the Socialist Party (SP) and the most militant workers’ organizations of the time. But the failure also reflected the SP’s “broad-church” approach to organization, which pushed it toward accommodating rather than openly challenging white supremacy. Its southern branches built a sometimes impressive following on the ruins of the defeated Populist Party, drawing members from across the color line, but the SP had nothing to say on the specific problems confronting Black workers during the brutal formative years of Jim Crow. In practice it combined abstract propaganda about the need for class unity with acquiescence to the racial status quo. In rejecting politics of any stripe, the revolutionary syndicalists of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) left themselves open to the same weakness: they led some of the most militant interracial labor struggles of the period and, at times, adopted a principled stand against lynching and racial violence, but didn’t see the need for a concerted attempt to win their white membership to a principled position on the “race question.” Both organizations included segregationists on one end, who did not challenge the doctrine of “race inferiority” underpinning Jim Crow, and a principled minority on the other who perceived but did not yet

consistently articulate the need to combat the poisonous effects of racism on working-class organization.

Some early American Marxists—particularly among the German immigrant community—grasped the revolutionary character of the Civil War, but the SP viewed the conflict, retrospectively, not as the most profound social upheaval in US history, but as an elaborate ruse put over on workers by northern capital. This was a tragic, and costly, misreading of the past. The contortions it produced can be seen in James O Neal's *The Workers in American History*, where he wrote (inaccurately) that northern labor opposed the war⁶ because “they felt that division along sectional lines delayed the coming solidarity of all workers North and South.” In *Class Struggles in America*, Algie Martin Simons argued that the antislavery character of the war was “a tale invented almost a decade after the war . . . as a means of glorifying the [Republican] party of plutocracy and maintaining its supremacy.” Citing Rhodes, Simons wrote that the slave’s “failure to play any part in the struggle that broke his shackles told the world that he was not of those who to free themselves would strike a blow.”⁷ In denying the slaves any role in emancipation and reducing the war to a scheme for capitalist expansion, Simons anticipated the economic determinist approach of the Progressive historian Charles Beard, giving encouragement to the tendency among white radicals to downplay both the centrality of slavery in the nation’s past and the urgent need to confront racism in the present. Although dressed up in the language of class struggle, this was not Marxist historiography but rank capitulation to the racist “common sense” saturating Jim Crow America.

Du Bois and the assault on racist orthodoxy

A handful of African Americans and white left-wing scholar activists had challenged the prevailing assessment of the war and its aftermath, but until the publication of W. E. B. Du Bois’s *Black Reconstruction in America* in 1935, their work made no real impact on popular consciousness. Du Bois was not exaggerating when he claimed that his work was an attempt to shake up a field marked by “endless sympathy with the white South . . . ridicule, contempt or silence for the Negro [and] a judicial attitude towards the North.” He confronted a scholarly and popular consensus steeped in racist “propaganda” and underpinned by “a deliberate attempt for so to change the facts of history that the story will make pleasant reading for [white] Americans.”⁸

Du Bois’s withering assault on this racist orthodoxy remains, eighty years later, the most intellectually courageous intervention in all of American historical writing. Foregrounding the relationship between the rise of antislavery

and changing American political economy during a period of acute transformation, *Black Reconstruction* is comprehensive in its reinterpretation of the war and the period of Reconstruction that followed. Its coherence rests on a framework both deeply influenced by Marx's understanding of history and the product of class struggle. Although some former allies branded him a "racialist" for breaking with the color-blind orthodoxy then dominating the US Left, the charge was absurd: Du Bois was clear that class conflict was key to explaining Reconstruction's failure. "Beneath the race issue, and *unconsciously of more fundamental weight*," he insisted, "was the economic issue. [Opponents of Black equality] were seeking [after the war] to reestablish the domination of property in Southern politics." Finally, Du Bois understood US slave emancipation in global terms, as a key episode in the wider developing confrontation between the small minority that controlled the world's wealth—based "in London and Paris, Berlin and Rome, New York and Rio de Janeiro"—and "the dark and vast sea of human labor . . . that great majority of mankind . . . despised [on account of] race and color, paid a wage below the level of decent living."⁹

Even taking into account these many strengths, the book's most significant contribution was its unconcealed celebration of Black agency. Against every "respectable" commentator who wrote off the slaves as active agents in their own emancipation, Du Bois placed them at the epicenter of world-changing events. It was, he insisted, a "general strike against slavery" that transformed the character of the war, undermined the Confederacy's ability to fight, and saved the Union.¹⁰ An obvious attempt to counter the malicious racism that had rendered the slaves as an inert mass, almost immediately the concept of the "slaves' general strike" became the focus of controversy, generating a debate that has not always done justice to the nuance of Du Bois's argument, and which has frequently lost sight of the context in which the book came to see the light of day.

Without question, Du Bois emphasized the transformative power of slave initiative in "decid[ing] the war." But he set his own interpretation off against "two theories, both over-elaborated": one suggesting that "the slave did nothing but faithfully serve his master until emancipation was thrust upon him; the other that the Negro immediately . . . left serfdom and took his stand with the Army of freedom." Instead, Du Bois insisted, "What the Negro did was to wait, look and listen. As soon as it became clear that the Union armies would not or could not return fugitive slaves, and that the masters with all their fume and fury were uncertain of victory, the slave entered upon a general strike." Significantly, he countered the Confederate assertion of universal slave loyalty not with its opposite—ubiquitous resistance—but

with a nuanced survey of a varied and uneven slave experience during wartime, one that evolved in close correlation with political and military calculations made at Richmond and Washington, and on battlefields scattered across the wartime South. It was the “Negroes of the cities, Negroes who were being hired out, Negroes of intelligence who could read and write,” Du Bois suggested, who began “carefully to watch the situation,” while the vast majority (ten to one, by his count)—those “left on the untouched and inaccessible plantations”—bided their time.¹¹

At the time *Black Reconstruction* came into print, some critics dismissed Du Bois’s notion of the “slaves’ general strike” as an attempt to impose conscious purpose and coherent form on the routine dislocations of war and episodes of spontaneous flight. With all of his “persuasive eloquence and literary power,” Abram L. Harris wrote, it was “impossible” for Du Bois “to convert the wholesale flight of Negroes . . . into a general strike.” Osvald Garrison Villard, with Du Bois one of the co-founders of the NAACP, complained that “in portraying the [flight] of the Negro during the war . . . as a sort of conscious general strike” rather than the “natural, unconscious, unorganized drift of embattled and endangered masses in the direction of freedom and safety,” Du Bois had overstepped “historic bounds.” If the slaves had not been completely passive in the eyes of liberal critics, neither did they intervene consciously to tip the scales toward freedom.¹²

Over the past generation, with Du Bois’s perspective driving a fundamental reappraisal of the war and its aftermath, the most general proposition underlying his notion of the slave’s general strike—that Black self-assertion played a central role in transforming the war—is widely accepted. If we understand (in his biographer David Levering Lewis’s words) “Du Bois’s general strike amount[ing] to little more than the common sense of self-preservation exhibited on a massive scale,”¹³ then there are few historians who would dissent. But Du Bois was clearly aiming to demonstrate something beyond “self-preservation,” stressing the conscious aspect of the slaves’ intervention in history and framing the disintegration of slavery as a major episode of class conflict. This, too, can be taken too far: some of the more celebratory studies of the slaves’ Civil War exaggerate their room for maneuver, reading Du Bois dogmatically and overlooking the unevenness in slave consciousness and circumstance to which he was closely attuned. Men and women make history, after all, but rarely in the conditions they choose, and never in history have agency and constraint rubbed up against one another more dramatically than in the predicament facing slaves in the wartime South.

Du Bois was neither the first nor the only student of the period to recognize the slaves’ agency. Two years before *Black Reconstruction* went

to print, supporters of the Trotskyist Left Opposition in the United States published *Communism and the Negro*, a pamphlet that argued, “The Negroes of the South were the decisive force in re-establishing the national unity of the country.”¹⁴ One of the few worthwhile appraisals of *Black Reconstruction* from a Marxist perspective, written by C. L. R. James’s close collaborator Morris Goelman for the Trotskyist *Fourth International* in 1950, acknowledged Du Bois’s theoretical advance without getting tied down by a rigid literalism or being driven to overstate slave agency. Especially in his chapter on the general strike, Goelman wrote, Du Bois was “seeking an historical anticipation of the modern proletariat in the Civil War Negro.” Whatever “errors and exaggerations” he made merely “underscore[d] the extent of his effort to incorporate the Negro into modern proletarian history.” This was an advance that Goelman celebrated, and one for which we are deeply indebted to Du Bois. The force of his argument lay in Du Bois’s depiction of wartime slave mobilization

not as the flight of a broken people, but as a purposeful weakening and paralysis of [the] Southern economy, as the necessary prelude to its fundamental reconstruction. This was part of a larger conception that the Negro in the South was not simply a long-suffering but essentially a revolutionary laboring class which attempted “prematurely” to remake Southern society.¹⁵

In highlighting the leading role of the slaves in shaping the outcome of the war and casting their wartime upheaval as a critical chapter in the history of the US working class, Du Bois pioneered a new interpretive framework that has reconfigured our understanding of the Civil War. But Du Bois intended *Black Reconstruction* as an interpretive demolition job on racist historical writing, and while he read widely in the dismal “scholarship” churned out to downplay the centrality of emancipation, the book involved almost no research in source materials. It’s doubtful whether Du Bois could have gone that route even if he’d wanted to: even as late as the mid-1950s, African American historian John Hope Franklin found himself excluded from archival collections across the Jim Crow South or forced to work in segregated side rooms as he labored on his own history of Reconstruction.¹⁶ But eighty years after Du Bois’s attempt to reposition the slaves as agents of their own freedom and more than a generation after the upheaval of the 1960s inspired a turn to “history from below,” historians have by now excavated a rich documentary base for assessing wartime Black agency. This cumulative record buries, once and for all, the myth of the passive slave, even as it allows a more precise calibration of the conceptual framework pioneered by Du Bois.

The slaves' politics

Crucially, we now know that although they were excluded from formal politics, slaves in many parts of the South were engaged in various forms of antislavery agitation during the period leading up to the war, and that their engagement accelerated as the national crisis over slavery intensified in the 1850s. James Oakes argued that in their frequent decision to take flight from the plantations, slave runaways forced the issue of slavery onto the national agenda, provoking deep and growing antagonism between the North and the South over the return of “fugitive” slaves, the passing of personal liberty laws, and the enlistment of the federal government in the business of slave-hunting. Communities of escaped slaves and free Blacks—forced to confront deeply entrenched racism in the “free” North—were not a mere appendage to northern abolitionism, but formed the backbone of the underground railroad, and were centrally involved in every aspect of organizing and internal debate within the antislavery ranks. The “driving force” in the formative phase of northern abolition, C. L. R. James asserted more than a half century ago, was the “insurrectionary slave and the free Negro in opposition to the Southern slave-owner.”¹⁷ Comparing northern settlements of fugitive slaves and free Blacks to maroon communities in other slave societies, Steven Hahn writes that northern Blacks “did the hard work of developing and sustaining radical abolition . . . [keeping] the emancipation process alive and deepen[ing] the crisis of the Union.”¹⁸

On top of day-to-day resistance—the routine acts of defiance that affected virtually every plantation—the slave South saw four major attempts at organized rebellion in the nineteenth century. In Virginia in 1800 the slave Gabriel—a skilled blacksmith “hired out” in Richmond, where he worked and socialized alongside white artisans radicalized by the French Revolution and was himself inspired by the slave revolt in Haiti—plotted to overturn the slave system, but his plans were betrayed by informers. Just over a decade later, in 1811, the Louisiana sugar parishes were the site of another major revolt, once more deeply connected to slave unrest in Haiti and the Caribbean. There the uprising came very close “to conquering New Orleans and establishing a black Republic on the shores of the Mississippi” before planters gained the upper hand.¹⁹ In Charleston in 1821 whites uncovered a major conspiracy involving perhaps hundreds of slaves and free Blacks led by Denmark Vesey. Like Gabriel, Vesey was a literate and charismatic skilled artisan of “imposing intellect,” formerly a slave but now free, and an influential “class leader” in the city’s AME church. Ten years later Nat Turner—a “gifted” slave preacher dubbed “the prophet” by those around him—claimed to have

received a message from God that he should “slay [his] enemies with their own weapons.” In August 1831 Turner led insurgent slaves in a march across Southampton County, Virginia, slaying whites as they advanced before being overpowered by the planter-organized white militia.

Large-scale rebellion disproved the white South’s facile claims about Black “contentment,” but their ruthless suppression was carefully staged in order to instill terror in the slave quarters. Twenty-six slaves were hung alongside Gabriel on Richmond’s public gallows after the plot was exposed. Up to sixty-six slave insurgents were killed in battle in Louisiana and more than thirty sentenced to death, their heads severed and “stuck on poles . . . along the river levee from New Orleans to LaPlace in an attempt to discourage similar rebellions.” At Charleston more than 130 (including four whites) were arrested; Vesey and thirty-four others were publicly hung in front of an “immense crowd” of “white as well as black,” and another thirty-one were deported to Cuba. Weeks after the suppression of Nat Turner’s rebellion, authorities were continuing to report the “the slaughter of many blacks without trial and under circumstances of great barbarity.” The number of slaves murdered in retribution was certainly in the hundreds.²⁰

Everywhere the reaction against the insurrectionary threat included harsh new restrictions on the slave community: at Charleston alone this involved the imposition of a nightly curfew that would remain in place through the war, strict surveillance of the free Black community, tight regulation of the “hiring out” system (including the wearing of “slave badges”) and a ban on public assembly, construction of the state arsenal (which later became The Citadel military academy), the forced exile of influential religious leaders, and the automatic incarceration of Black seamen coming into the port. Thirty years later a visiting abolitionist concluded, after hearing a Charleston slave insist that the Blacks “wants to be free very bad . . . and may be will fight before long if they don’t get freedom somehow,” that they were astute enough to hold off until they had some prospect of success. “They know and they dread the slaveholders’ power [and] are afraid to assail it without first effecting a combination among themselves.” This was the predicament confronting slaves across the antebellum South: their calculations about the feasibility of open rebellion were informed by a keen—and rational—appreciation of their masters’ overwhelming power.²¹

Slaves were acutely attentive to any shift in the political winds, and the national crisis that began to intensify in the early 1850s presented them with new opportunities. The 1856 presidential election, heralding the emergence of antislavery politics through the candidacy of John C. Frémont, antagonized proslavery whites in the same proportion as it aroused the hopes of

watchful slaves. Among the escaped slaves who would later enlist in the Union military was Florida-born Prince Lamkin, who claimed that slaves there had “expected all this war ever since Frémont’s time.” Another veteran recalled that upon landing ashore with the 54th Massachusetts (Colored) Regiment, Blacks in lowcountry South Carolina informed him “there had been a conspiracy hatching among the slaves, as far back as 1856, the year Frémont was up for the Presidency.”²² One of the most illuminating antebellum slave memoirs—from the Tennessee-based agitator William Webb—offers evidence of the clear link between the intrusion of the slavery controversy into national politics and a sharp increase in grassroots agitation among the slaves. “There arose a great trouble in the Southern States, about Frémont running for President,” Webb recalled. “[White Southerners] commenced having great meetings . . . saying the streets would run with blood before the North should rule.”

The name of Frémont sounded in every colored person’s heart [and] meant freedom to them. They held great meetings, and had speeches among themselves, in secret. They knew if the slave-holders heard about them holding meetings it would be death to them. And when Frémont ran and was defeated, a great anger arose among the colored people, but the slave-holders were rejoiced. Then the slaves began to study how they would get free. . . . They would make speeches among themselves . . . about what steps they would take. Some would speak about rebelling and killing, and some would speak, and say, “wait for the next four years.” They said they felt as if the next President would set the colored people free.²³

Lincoln would be late in assuming this role, but reports from across the South show that slaves everywhere shared Webb’s deep conviction about the meaning of the war and the trajectory along which events were moving. Lamkin recalled “the secret anxiety of slaves to know about the election of Pres. Lincoln, & their all refusing to work on March 4th,” the date of Lincoln’s first inauguration. “The negroes are all of opinion that Lincoln is to come here to free them,” a plantation mistress at Charleston complained when election results became known. Near Pensacola slaves presented themselves to the command at Fort Pickens even before the war began, “entertaining the idea,” in one officer’s words, that federal troops “were placed here to protect them and grant them their freedom.”²⁴ A year after the outbreak of war the situation had become far more explosive. New Orleans planters reported that there were “a great many Negroes out in the woods [who] think Old Lincoln is fighting for them.” After her husband went off to join the Confederates, a Texas mistress complained that her slaves were “doing nothing,” and that “nearly all the Negroes around here are at it,” with some “getting so high on anticipation of the glorious freedom by the Yankees that they resist a whipping.” The coming of

war had dramatically expanded the possibilities for slave resistance and, as Du Bois insisted, those held in bondage across the South would watch impatiently for opportunities to assert their claim to freedom.²⁵

Confederate mobilization opens the breach

The first significant openings for slave self-assertion were created not by a benevolent Lincoln administration, nor even by Union Army officers who would later come to play a crucial role, but by the Confederacy. The supreme paradox of the bloody, four-year conflict is that the South's ability to prosecute the war was completely dependent on impressed slave labor. From the construction of fortifications around Charleston harbor at the outset of the war to the "monuments to negro labor" in the trenchworks and artillery installations essential to the defense against General George McClellan's Peninsula Campaign in the spring and summer of 1862, impressed slaves played an indispensable role in sustaining the war-making capacity of the Confederacy.²⁶ But in a war organized to prolong their own enslavement, Black laborers could be pressed into military work only so long as Confederates wielded the necessary coercive power, and by the summer of 1862 there were signs that the system was collapsing under the strains of war.

"The credit of having first conquered their prejudices against the employment of Blacks," the antislavery editor Horace Greeley conceded, "is fairly due to the rebels." Reports that impressed slave labor bolstered the Confederacy began to figure prominently in abolitionist appeals for Black military enlistment in the North. "If Abraham Lincoln does not have the negro on his side," Wendell Phillips told an audience in the spring of 1862, "Jefferson Davis will have him on his."²⁷ But in deploying slaves as military laborers throughout the South, Confederate officials opened a perilous breach in slavery's defenses. The organization of an elaborate system for transporting laborers back and forth across the region—mainly from the interior of the Gulf and seaboard states toward the vulnerable coast—presented serious problems for slaveholders and military officials alike. Among other things, the traffic brought news and intelligence to slaves in remote plantation districts about the blows being inflicted on their "invincible" masters by Lincoln's military. Planters across the South were concerned that slaves coming back from the labor camps "returned to the plantation with new and dangerous ideas which they imparted to the other slaves . . . complicating the problem of control and discipline at home."²⁸

As early enthusiasm for war among southern whites began to wane, planters increasingly resented the military's continual intrusions on their

prerogative, and withdrew their cooperation. Compelled to work under horrific, often lethal conditions, slave laborers escaped in droves, fleeing to the interior or—when they were within range—making a break for Union lines. By late 1862 the impressment system was on the verge of collapse, and chronic labor shortages began to seriously impact on the Confederacy's war-making capacity. The war launched to make slavery permanent and unassailable was unleashing the very forces that would bring it crashing down.

Slave consciousness: a varying and fluid context

Even in his brief elaboration of the scope of the slaves' "general strike," Du Bois was careful to acknowledge the uneven character of slave consciousness and opportunity during the war. The evidence accumulated over the past generation allows a more precise assessment—one that reveals regional variation and change over time in a fluid military situation, confirming the slaves' agency but also the substantial limitations on their ability to shape events. Frederick Douglass wrote that during the war abolitionists in the North vacillated "between the dim light of hope and the gloomy shadow of despair," and that condition—rooted in the excruciating gap between aspiration and possibility—must have been even more pronounced among the four million slaves chafing under Confederate rule in the midst of a war over slavery.²⁹

At the most basic level, differences in consciousness emanated from the humanity of the slaves themselves. "The four million slaves of the South were not homogenous either in condition or outlook," Bruce Levine has argued. They made their calculations about how to take advantage of the war in a variety of settings, and "like any section of humanity, displayed a wide range of personalities. Some were quick; others were not. Some were audacious, others were not. . . . Some attended closely as possible to political news; others simply accepted that their lot, whatever its rights and wrongs, was fixed and unchangeable."³⁰ On top of this were piled a wide range of circumstances across the region that could either encourage or deter collective action.

The "grapevine telegraph"—the scaffolding of slave organization—was remarkably efficient in transmitting news and intelligence across much of the South, but there were considerable gaps as well. Slaves in cities and market towns or those brought into early contact with Union occupation had little trouble keeping abreast of developments, and played a critical role in moving information along waterways, roads, and railroad lines deep into the interior. But large swathes of the plantation South remained cut off and isolated, even after the war's end. Early in the war, an older study concluded, "Except in invaded regions, and in areas near the Federal lines, the war seems

not to have wrought any great changes in the life to which the slaves were accustomed." In the late-settled cotton frontier of southwest Georgia, Susan O'Donovan found in her recent work that the outbreak of war "barely stirred [the] slaves," and "antebellum rhythms of . . . life remained largely intact." Even there, though, war was eroding the planters' control: they worried about sending their impressed slaves to labor in Savannah, where "the negroes are [as] fully informed on the [war] as we are."³¹

The pattern of antebellum slave insurgency suggests that urban areas and districts home to long-established slave communities allowed greater space for large-scale clandestine organization than isolated rural districts. It was often militant slaves in the port cities—brought into contact with the wider Atlantic world—who managed to give a lead to the struggles of plantation laborers in the surrounding countryside, a trend that persisted through the war and beyond into Reconstruction. With Union naval and land forces pressing upon the coast and occupying strategic territory from early in the war, significant disparities became evident in the relative position of slave communities along the coast and those in the interior. The Union's capture of Port Royal on November 1861 made the South Carolina Sea Islands a beacon for escaping slaves from three surrounding states, with Beaufort earning a reputation as a "Negro heaven"; the taking of New Orleans six months later detonated a slave rebellion across southern Louisiana from which planters never recovered. Large-scale slave movement—a kind of heaving before slavery's coming disintegration—was concentrated along the coast until Union forces began to win strategic victories up and down the Mississippi, culminating in Ulysses S. Grant's triumph at Vicksburg in July of 1863, which accelerated the collapse of slavery in the Mississippi Valley.

This close correlation between Union military advances and the expanding scope of Black freedom is an essential feature, though it has to be emphasized that the dynamic operated in both directions. Early on, for example, the northern command regarded Port Royal as a prize mainly because of the role it could play as a fueling station for their Atlantic blockade fleet. It was the continual insistence of slaves and a handful of allies in the Union military that the area might more advantageously serve as a beachhead for dismantling slavery that allowed Union forces there by early 1863 to begin to inflict heavy blows against the heartland of secession. A similar dynamic was evident elsewhere. Leading military historians have attempted, recently, to draw a sharp—and artificial—distinction between preserving the Union and emancipation as war aims.³² But it was only the transformation of the war into an armed antislavery crusade that made defeat of the slaveholders' rebellion possible, and that transformation was inconceivable without the slaves' leading role.

Convergence: Union war aims and slave aspirations

How might we understand slave self-activity during the war in such a way that acknowledges *both* the leading role they played, as a class, in transforming the war *and* the highly uneven levels of consciousness and circumstance that characterized the slave South? Steven Hahn, a leading historian of US slave emancipation whose *A Nation Under Our Feet* makes an important contribution to our understanding of grassroots Black mobilization in the rural South, has argued that there is “good reason” to regard the slaves during wartime as “discrete, ever-developing political and military bodies moving in and out of alliances as the circumstances of power and politics allowed.”³³ But such an approach ascribes a high level of coherence, uniformity, and premeditation to a process that was more complex and uneven, and one in which constraints on slave assertion varied widely from one locale to another, sometimes changing dramatically in a matter of weeks, days, or even hours. Consider, for example, the tragic final days in the life of Amy Spain, the sixteen-year-old slave who ventured out to publicly cheer on Sherman’s troops as they took Darlington, South Carolina, in the spring of 1865, but who met her death on the gallows a few days later, after the Union Army had moved on and Confederates retook the town.³⁴

The abolitionist James Redpath’s observations in the urban South on the cusp of war convey the unevenness in the slaves’ predicament and the caution they had to exercise in determining whether and when to shift from “watching and waiting” to open, collective defiance. “At Richmond and Wilmington,” he reported, “I found the slaves discontented, but despondingly resigned to their fate,” while at Charleston they struck him as “morose and savagely brooding over their wrongs.” There, he was convinced, the slaves’ hesitation would dissolve with an open declaration of war: “[I]f the roar of hostile cannon was to be heard by the slaves, or a hostile fleet was seen sailing up the bay,” he predicted, “then . . . would the sewers of the city be instantly filled with the blood of the slave masters.” Redpath’s judgment on the varying disposition among slaves in the urban South is worth noting, even if he underestimated the obstacles to open rebellion in Charleston, where it was only in the final weeks of the war that Union military success rendered it possible for the city’s Black majority to show their hand. In the early stages of the war, at least, slaves in Richmond—the Confederate capital—thought it inconceivable that their masters might come out on the losing end, and acted accordingly: “Thousands of Troops were Sent to Richmond from all parts of the country,” one recalled, so that it “appeared to be an impossibility, to us, Colored people, that they could ever be conquored.”³⁵

On the issue of slave “contrabands,” too, it makes sense to acknowledge a wide disparity in circumstances. It is no doubt true, as Hahn suggests, that the contraband camps served, in part, as “schools of citizenship”—the staging sites for a vibrant political discourse among fugitive slaves. But the same camps were also—and perhaps more often—hosts to epidemic misery, destitution, violence, and death. Despite the paternalism he brought to his work in organizing relief in the Mississippi Valley, Superintendent of Contrabands for the Department of the Tennessee John Eaton is credible in describing the situation he confronted as the camps filled with refugees.³⁶ As word of Union military advances spread via the slave telegraph across the Western Theater, the military faced a steady flow of escaping slaves seeking refuge behind Union lines.

These escaping slaves make up a large number of those included by Du Bois as having taken part in the “general strike,” and figure in more recent accounts emphasizing slave deliberation. But as Eaton attests, the sequence by which slaves made their way to the camps varied. As Union control over the region tightened, probably a majority came in on their own volition through a more or less organized process of flight and escape. But Eaton points out that in the early period camp commanders were often compelled to bring in under military protection those who’d been left to fend for themselves by masters deserting their plantations in the face of advancing Union forces. Made up overwhelmingly of the elderly and the infirm, “encumbered” women and their young children, this early majority had, according to Eaton, “become so completely broken down in spirit, through suffering” that “it was almost impossible to arouse them.”³⁷ His grim account suggests the need to differentiate between those slaves in a position to actively pursue emancipation and those carried along by events beyond their control.

In light of these circumstances, which prevailed well beyond the Mississippi Valley, does it make sense to regard slaves as a *discrete* element in the war? The relationship between slaves and the Union military is complicated, but it seems incontestable that the dynamics set in motion during a protracted war brought about an increasing convergence of interests. The crisis that generated new openings for slave self-assertion did not come about simply because whites had “fallen out” with one another, as some have suggested: the fact that it was *over the question of slavery* that the Republican-led North and the slaveholder-led Confederacy came to blows was hugely significant. Union forces benefited in tangible and important ways from slave intelligence, from their labor in the camps, and eventually from Black military service, but the relationship worked both ways: it is difficult to see how the slaves’ room for maneuver could have been so dramatically expanded

absent the strategic military advances won by the Union military. In this respect, it makes more sense to delineate the increasing convergence of Union war aims and slave aspirations rather than to view the slaves as a discrete or self-standing entity negotiating a series of pragmatic, ever-shifting alliances.

There are, to be sure, striking examples of autonomous or semi-autonomous slave organization in which particular communities negotiated their relationship with the Union military on their own terms. In his biography of Abraham Galloway, David S. Cecelski recounts the experience of Edward Kinsley, a white recruiter attached to the Massachusetts 45th Colored Infantry, who was initially unsuccessful in trying to convince Black North Carolinians to enlist until the spring of 1863, when he was invited to a Black-owned boarding house in New Bern, blindfolded and led to a room in the attic where Galloway and others interviewed him at gunpoint. There they

put him under a solemn oath, that any colored man enlisting in North Carolina should have the same pay as their colored brethren enlisted in Massachusetts; their families should be provided for; their children should be taught to read; and if they should be taken prisoners, the government should see to it that they were treated as prisoners of war.

Kinsley agreed, and “the next day the word went forth, Blacks came to the recruiting stations by the hundreds and a brigade was soon formed.”³⁸

The New Bern episode is a powerful example of an organized attempt by slaves and the recently freed to steer events, and there are others. Galloway’s counterpart in the Mississippi Valley, William Webb, recalls the establishment of elaborate networks of slave resistance across parts of Tennessee before the war; by late 1862 these extended south into Mississippi and northern Louisiana and north into Kentucky. In his suggestions for expanding organization throughout the Mississippi Valley, readers of Webb’s autobiography are afforded a rare glimpse of the logistics of the slave telegraph: during clandestine meetings with coconspirators Webb advocated “establish[ing] a king in every State, and let every king make his laws in his own State, and let his place be the headquarters. I thought it best for each king to appoint a man to travel twelve miles, and then hand the news to another man, and so on, till the news reached from Louisiana to Mississippi.” Winthrop Jordan unearthed the bones of a slave conspiracy in Adams County, Mississippi, that began within four weeks of the outbreak of war, with news and intelligence likely traveling along the route laid down by Webb and others. By early May 1861 local whites were reporting that “a great many carriage drivers” in and around Natchez seemed to be implicated in a conspiracy known simply as “The Plan.” In her study of the Battle of Milliken’s Bend, Linda Barnickel

confirms that leaders of similar covert networks played a crucial role in recruiting slaves into Union ranks in the spring and summer of 1863.³⁹

The dynamics evident at New Bern and in parts of the Mississippi Valley in the first half of 1863 were by no means exceptional, but neither do they typify relations between escaped slaves and the Union Army, much less represent conditions universal among slaves across the Confederacy. At the other end of the spectrum we have credible testimony from slaves living on remote plantations that word of Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation never reached them until after the war, that in some places even after word arrived at the war's end that they were freed, laborers felt so intimidated by their former masters' presence that they refrained from celebrating or marking the occasion in any way—even though, as one put it—their “joy was unspeakable.”⁴⁰ We have testimony from planters as late as August and September of 1865 expressing their resentment that just now—four or five months *after* the surrender at Appomattox—they were being compelled by northern troops to inform laborers on their plantations that they were no longer slaves. All of this reaffirms the conspicuous unevenness that Du Bois pointed out in his compelling but qualified assertion about the “slaves’ general strike.”

Conclusion: The slave vanguard in an army of emancipation

“When Northern armies entered the South they became armies of emancipation,” Du Bois wrote: “It was the last thing they planned to be.”⁴¹ Both sides of that assessment are worth bearing in mind. Before his election and into the second year of the war, Lincoln publicly disavowed at every opportunity any intention to tamper with slavery where it already existed. This was a key element in his first inaugural address, and here it makes sense to take Lincoln at his word—he had “no purpose to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists” at this point and “no inclination to do so.” The determination to exclude slavery from northern strategy in the early phase of the war—to “spare the enemy’s most vulnerable spot”—profoundly affected its early conduct. Although he refrained from attributing the North’s poor military performance in the early period of the war to political weaknesses alone, Karl Marx acknowledged in the summer of 1862 that “In part, the military causes of the crisis are connected with the political ones.”⁴²

There are complex strategic considerations in the debate over military strategy during the first year and a half of the war, but arguably Lincoln’s attempt to conciliate the border states by—as General George McClellan put it—continually “dodg[ing] the nigger question” merely delayed the day

of reckoning, at a cost of tens of thousands of lives. Lincoln's early reluctance to link slave emancipation and restoration of the Union, his determination that the war should not—in his own words—"degenerate into a violent and remorseless revolutionary struggle," won him the (temporary) admiration of the inept, unapologetic racist McClellan, who declared the early Lincoln "perfectly honest and . . . really sound on the nigger question." For Marx and for many of the most astute abolitionists, the president's "anxious regard for the wishes, advantages, interests of the [border states] blunted the Civil War's point of principle and . . . deprived it of its soul."⁴³ In a speech delivered near his home in Rochester, New York on the Fourth of July in 1862, Frederick Douglass was scathing in his criticism of the Republican leadership in Washington who, "with all its admitted wisdom and sagacity, utterly failed for a long time to comprehend the nature and extent" of the war. The Lincoln administration had thus far "fought the rebels with the Olive branch," he wrote. "The people must teach them to fight them with the sword":

[S]lavery is the life of the rebellion. Let the loyal army but inscribe upon its banner, Emancipation and protection to all who will rally under it, and no power could prevent a stampede from slavery, such as the world has not witnessed since the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea. I am convinced that this rebellion and slavery are twin monsters, that they must fall or flourish together, and that all attempts at upholding one while putting down the other, will be followed by continued trains of darkening calamities. . . .⁴⁴

Lincoln's slow but sure conversion to an antislavery war was brought about in part by the impossibility of defeating his Confederate adversaries through the tidy, limited war he set out to oversee in April 1861. After the scale of the disastrous failure of McClellan's Peninsula Campaign became clear in the summer of 1862, a *New York Tribune* correspondent concluded, perceptively, "that it is utterly impossible for us to subdue the rebels without an alliance with their slaves."⁴⁵ By this time the northern public—and Lincoln himself—were moving rapidly toward the same conclusion.

It was the relentless insistence of the slaves and their allies that revolutionary war was the only way forward that brought purpose and soul to the Union cause in the Civil War, and which more than any other factor drove the war's transformation into a revolutionary confrontation with the slave system. Du Bois was the first prominent historian to assert this publicly, and he did so without equivocating. We don't have to view slaves as acting completely on their own or independently of the Union military to acknowledge their leading role. Du Bois didn't do so in his own work, and in important ways such an approach gets in the way of a nuanced understanding of the ways in which the northern bourgeoisie's limited revolution from above

converged with, and was pushed forward by, the slaves' revolution from below. As Ira Berlin has put it, "Slaves were the prime movers in the emancipation drama, not the sole movers. They set others in motion, including many who never would have moved if left to their own devices."⁴⁶

In insisting that their own emancipation was the central question at stake during the Civil War, the slaves—the South's "revolutionary class"—opened up a new struggle over the meaning of freedom. In some ways the conclusion of the war marked the beginning, and not the end, of the contest over freedom's meaning. Union victory would see the slaves freed, but very quickly it would become clear that the cramped vision of freedom embraced by the triumphant Northern bourgeoisie—wielding power through the Republican Party—fell far short of the aspirations of freed slaves. The government "felt that it had done enough" for the slaves, Douglass recalled. "It had made him free, and henceforth he must make his own way in the world [and] 'Root, pig, or die.'" With "neither property, money, nor friends," the former slaves were "free from the old plantation" but left with "nothing but the dusty road" under their feet.⁴⁷ An Arkansas freedman pleaded with Union army officers in early 1866 that he needed "some land. I am helpless; you do nothing for me but give me freedom." Another ex-slave complained bitterly in the same vein, that she was left at the end of the war with "freedom, and a hungry belly." Their new predicament would in some ways embody the stark disparity between promise and reality that characterized the lives of workers generally under capitalism. In the bitter struggle that commenced with emancipation, the former slaves would reassert their claim to an expansive freedom, compelling their Northern "liberators" to choose between following through on a commitment to thoroughgoing equality or retreating toward an accommodation with the spirit of the slave South.⁴⁸

-
1. William E. Woodward, *Meet General Grant* (New York: H. Liveright, 1928), 372.
 2. James Ford Rhodes, *History of the Civil War, 1861–1865* (New York: Macmillan, 1917), 381.
 3. Woodrow Wilson, "Anti-Slavery History and Biography," *Atlantic Monthly* 72 (1893): 272–74.
 4. Eric Foner writes (xi) that the Dunning School "did more than reflect prevailing prejudices—they strengthened and helped perpetuate them . . . offer[ing] scholarly legitimacy to the disfranchisement of southern blacks and to the Jim Crow system that was becoming entrenched as they were writing." See Foner's "Foreword" and John David Smith's "Introduction" (1–47) in Smith and J. Vincent Lowry, eds. *The Dunning School: Historians, Race and the Meaning of Reconstruction* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013).
 5. Francis Butler Simkins and Robert Hilliard Woody, *South Carolina During Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1932), 12–14, 24, and n. 42.

6. Although weak and undeveloped, northern trade unions overwhelmingly supported the Union cause, and in many cases leading trade unionists and radicals played a leading role in the military confrontation with the Confederacy. See Mark Lause, *Free Labor: The Civil War and the Making of the American Working Class* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press 2015).
7. James O Neal, *The Workers in American History* (Terre Haute: J. O Neal, 1910), 225–226; Algie M. Simons, *Class Struggles in America* (Chicago, C. H. Kerr & Co., 1903), 67; and *Social Forces in American History* (New York: Macmillan, 1911), 274.
8. W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America: An Essay Toward a History of the Part which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America, 1860–1880* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007 rep. [1935]). Quotes are from his chapter on “The Propaganda of History,” 711–729.
9. *Ibid.*, 381, 12.
10. *Ibid.*, 51, and all of chapter 4.
11. *Ibid.*, 57, 59, 66.
12. Abram L. Harris, “Reconstruction and the Negro,” *The New Republic* (Aug 7, 1935), 367; Oswald Garrison Villard, “Black Controversy,” *Saturday Review of Literature* XIII, no. 12 (January 18, 1936): 3–4, 15.
13. David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois, 1919–1963: The Fight for Equality and the American Century* (New York: Holt, 2001), 372.
14. Max Schachtman, *Race and Revolution* (London: Verso, 2013), 15.
15. Morris Goelman wrote under the pseudonym “William Gorman.” See “W. E. B. Du Bois and His Work,” *Fourth International* 11, no. 3 (May–June 1950): 80–86, <https://www.marxists.org/history/etol/newspape/fi/vol11/no03/gorman.htm>.
16. John Hope Franklin, *Reconstruction after the Civil War* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961).
17. James Oakes, “The Political Significance of Slave Resistance,” *History Workshop*, 22 (Autumn, 1986); C. L. R. James [J. Meyer], “Stalinism and Negro History,” *Fourth International* 10, no. 10 (Nov. 1949): 309–314, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1949/11/stalinism-negro.htm>.
18. Steven Hahn, “Slaves at Large,” in *The Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2009), 43.
19. Littice Bacon-Blood, “The Largest Slave Revolt in US History is Commemorated,” *New Orleans Times-Picayune*, Jan. 3, 2011, http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2011/01/the_largest_slave_revolt_in_us.html.
20. On Gabriel’s rebellion see Douglas R. Egerton, *Gabriel’s Rebellion: The Virginia Slave Conspiracies of 1800 and 1802* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1993) and James Sidbury, *Ploughshares into Swords: Race, Rebellion and Identity in Gabriel’s Virginia, 1730–1810* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997); on the 1811 Louisiana revolt see Daniel Rasmussen, *American Uprising: The Untold Story of America’s Largest Slave Revolt* (New York: Harper, 2011); on the Vesey conspiracy see Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free: The Lives of Denmark Vesey* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, 2004); on Nat Turner’s revolt see Kenneth S. Greenberg, ed. *Nat Turner: A Slave Rebellion in History and Memory* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). Quotes from Bacon-Blood, “The Largest Slave Revolt”; Egerton, *He Shall Go Out Free*, 197; *Richmond Whig*, Sept. 3, 1831, quoted in Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1983), 301.
21. James Redpath, *The Roving Editor: Or, Talks with Slaves in the Southern States* (New York: A. B. Burdick, 1859), 57, 52.
22. Christopher Looby, ed., *The Complete Civil War Journal and Selected Letters of Thomas Wentworth Higginson* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), entry for Dec. 4,

- 1862, 59; Corporal James Henry Gooding, *On the Altar of Freedom: A Black Soldier's Civil War Letters from the Front* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1991), 27.
23. William Webb, *The History of William Webb, Composed by Himself* (Detroit: Egbert Hoekstra, 1873), 13, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/webb/menu.html>.
 24. The slaves were "delivered to the [Pensacola] city marshal to be returned to their owners" by commanders at Fort Pickens.
 25. Jane Pettigrew to Charles Pettigrew, Nov. 7, 1860, in Steven A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 272; First Lieut. A.J. Slemmer to Lieut. Col. L. Thomas, March 18, 1861, in *The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1880–1901), <https://ehistory.osu.edu/books/official-records/114/0750>; Gideon Pillow to Jefferson Davis, July 26, 1862, in Armstead L. Robinson, *Bitter Fruits of Bondage: The Demise of Slavery and the Collapse of the Confederacy, 1861–1865* (Charlottesville, Va.: University of Virginia Press, 2005), 180; Lizzie Neblett to Will Neblett, Aug. 18, 1863, in Drew Gilpin Faust, *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), 66.
 26. On "monuments to negro labor" see Glenn David Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign and the Necessity of Emancipation: African Americans and the Fight for Freedom* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 122. Black labor was critical in part because of the racial stigma attached to menial labor in the South—white soldiers objected being assigned to essential work involving the pick and shovel. "Our people are opposed to work," Robert E. Lee wrote to Jeff Davis (Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign*, 171).
 27. Horace Greeley, *American Conflict: A History of the Great Rebellion in the United States of America, 1860–1865* (Hartford, O.D. Case & Company; 1864–66), 522; Phillips quoted in Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign*, 79. A distinction must be made between impressment and Black military service on behalf of the Confederacy—a favorite myth of Confederate apologists. Although a debate over slave enlistment developed, out of desperation, in the closing weeks of the war, military service in the Confederate ranks was never on offer to slaves. See Bruce Levine, "Myth and Reality: Black Confederates," *North & South* 10, no. 2 (July 2007): 40–45.
 28. Bell Irvin Wiley, *Southern Negroes, 1861–1865* (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1938), 125.
 29. Frederick Douglass, "Hope and Despair in These Cowardly Times," An Address Delivered in Rochester, New York, April 28, 1861, in Louis P. Masur, ed. *The Real War Will Never Get in the Books: Selections from Writers During the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 101.
 30. Bruce Levine, *The Fall of the House of Dixie: The Civil War and the Social Revolution that Transformed the South* (New York: Random House, 2013), 91–93.
 31. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 59, 69, quoting John Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen: Reminiscences of the Civil War* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1907), 2, 3, 19, 32, 134; Wiley, *Southern Negroes*, 43; Susan E. O'Donovan, *Becoming Free in the Cotton South* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 80.
 32. See for example Gary W. Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), and Eric Foner's critical review in "Why the North Fought the Civil War," *New York Times*, April 29, 2011, http://www.nytimes.com/2011/05/01/books/review/book-review-the-union-war-by-gary-w-gallagher.html?_r=0.
 33. Steven Hahn, "Greatest Slave Rebellion," in *Political Worlds of Slavery and Freedom*, 78. See my review of Hahn's *A Nation Under Our Feet in Labor: Studies in the Working-Class History of the Americas*, 1:3 (Fall 2004): 145–147.

34. "Hanging of Amy Spain," *Harpers' Weekly* (Sept. 30, 1865), 613.
35. Redpath, *The Roving Editor*, 52; Richmond slave quoted in Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign*, 29.
36. Du Bois quotes Eaton's report extensively—one of the few primary sources he makes use of in *Black Reconstruction*.
37. Eaton, *Grant, Lincoln and the Freedmen*, 19, citing a letter from his assistant general superintendent at Vicksburg.
38. David S. Cecelski, *The Fire of Freedom: Abraham Galloway and the Slaves' Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), xv–xvi.
39. Webb, *History of William Webb*, 18; Winthrop D. Jordan, *Tumult and Silence at Second Creek: An Inquiry into a Civil War Slave Conspiracy* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995), 11; Linda Barnickel, *Milliken's Bend: A Civil War Battle in History and Memory* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2013), 63–66.
40. Rev. Irving E. Lowery, *Life on the Old Plantation in Ante-Bellum Days, or A Story Based on Facts* (Columbia: State Co. Printers, 1911), 120–121.
41. Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction*, 55.
42. Abraham Lincoln, "First Inaugural Address," in *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* [CWAL], vol. 4 (March 4, 1861), 263, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln4/1:389?rgn=div1;view=fulltext>; Karl Marx, "A Criticism of American Affairs," (Aug. 9, 1862) *Marx and Engels Collected Works* [MECW] Vol. 19, 226.
43. Lincoln, "Annual Message to Congress," CWAL (Dec. 3, 1861), 49, <http://quod.lib.umich.edu/l/lincoln/lincoln5/1:87?rgn=div1;singlegenre=All;sort=occur;subview=detail;type=simple;view=fulltext;q1=degenerate+into+a+violent+and+remorseless>; George McClellan to Samuel L. M. Barlow, Nov. 8, 1861; Karl Marx, "A Criticism of American Affairs," (Aug. 9, 1862), *MECW*, Vol. 19, 226.
44. Frederick Douglass, "The Slaveholders' Rebellion," in Philip S. Foner, ed. *The Life and Writings of Frederick Douglass*, Vol. 3: The Civil War (New York: International Publishers, 1952), 252, 258.
45. Samuel Wilkeson of the *New York Tribune* quoted in Brasher, *The Peninsula Campaign*, 196.
46. Ira Berlin, "Who Freed the Slaves? Emancipation and Its Meaning," in David W. Blight and Brooks D. Simpson, eds., *Union and Emancipation: Essays on Politics and Race in the Civil War Era* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1997), 112.
47. Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (Hartford, CT: Park Publishing co., 1881), 385, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/neh/douglasslife/douglass.html>
48. Testimony of George R. Weeks in *Report of the Joint Committee on Reconstruction*, Part 3, 77.